

Title: Surveying Cornell Cooperative Extension Educators on Ornamental IPM

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Abstract:

While all counties in NY have ornamentals producers, not all counties have someone designated to answer their pest management questions. An email survey was sent to all counties to determine which educators work with the ornamentals industry and whether the Ornamentals IPM team could be of assistance to them. Ten responses were from educators with whom we already cooperate and their responses reflected that. For the remaining 20 respondents, most do work with or answer questions from ornamentals growers. The majority indicated that there was information or training that we could provide them that would be helpful in dealing with ornamentals pest management issues. They would also be willing to help us organize grower training programs in their counties.

Background and justification:

Every county in NYS has ornamentals industries, from Christmas tree farms to retail greenhouses to nurseries and sod farms. However, only about 13 counties have commercial horticulture extension educators. Many of the other counties have community or horticulture educators who answer the ornamentals questions that come in to the office. While the Ornamentals IPM team cooperates in a variety of ways with all of the commercial hort educators, the other educators may not realize that we would be willing to help them work with growers in their counties or provide information for industry questions they might receive on pest management.

Objectives:

To determine if county educators work with the ornamental industry and if they are interested in cooperating with the Ornamentals IPM team for information exchange and training.

Procedures:

A list of the Cornell Cooperative Extension educators that answer questions from ornamentals producers was created by emailing each county office. A survey was emailed to whoever was identified by the county. Questions covered their work with ornamental growers, their need for information or training we could provide them, if they would like to receive the ornamental e-newsletter, if they would like to participate in educator training, and if they would be willing to help us organize grower training in their county.

Results and discussion:

Of the 56 counties, we received responses from 34 counties. Four reported either open positions or no-one answering this type of question. Results were divided into those educators with whom we currently cooperate and those who we have not yet cooperated with.

Of the 10 cooperating educators, all work with greenhouse growers, 7 work with nursery growers, 6 with greenhouse growers and 1 with a sod grower. They suggested a variety of

additional information we could provide that would be helpful in their interaction with the ornamental industry. All already receive the e-newsletter and most have already worked with us to organize local events. These answers seem obvious as they are already cooperators but it was helpful to see their suggestions for additional ways we could help them.

From the 20 educators that do not work specifically in commercial hort, 70% do work with ornamental growers. All work with Christmas tree growers, and most (55-60%) work with nurseries and greenhouses. Only 1 works with a sod producer. An additional 14% of the respondents get questions from ornamental growers even if they don't work with them. Seventy-five percent thought that there was information we could provide them that would help them with ornamentals growers' pest management questions and 75% would like to participate in educator training in ornamental IPM. Ninety-five percent would like to receive the ornamentals e-newsletter. Eighty-eight percent are willing to help us organize programs in their county.

Percentages may be skewed by the fact that those already working with ornamentals growers or needing help answering their questions may have been more likely to respond to the survey. However, the results do suggest that there is a need for educator training in ornamentals IPM and an opportunity for wider cooperation between extension educators and the Ornamentals IPM team.

Implications:

The Ornamentals IPM team should work to provide training and information on Ornamental IPM to county extension educators that do not currently have positions in commercial horticulture. While the types of information they need may not be the same as those educators with whom we already work, the broader cooperation may help us to reach more growers around the state with our IPM programs.

Samples of resources:

Survey form (next page)

CCE Educator Email survey questions

Do you work with nursery, greenhouse, Christmas tree or sod producers?

Yes No

If so, which?

Nursery

Christmas tree producers

Greenhouse

Sod

Do you ever get questions from these producers, even if they are not your primary clientele group?

Yes No

Is there information or training that we could provide you that would help you with ornamental producers' pest management questions?

Yes No

If yes, please explain.

Would you like to receive the quarterly Ornamentals IPM e-newsletter?

Yes No

Would you like to participate in educator training programs in ornamental IPM?

Yes No

If yes, would you be willing to travel to Ithaca for training or be more likely to attend if the training was held in your region?

Local only Willing to travel

Would you be willing to help us organize Ornamental IPM programs in your county or region (facilities, advertising, etc.)?

Yes No

If yes, are there specific programs that you need?